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AMERICAN WOMAN REBUILDS TOWN WIPED OUT BY FIRST GERMAN RUSH

[By Associated Press]

VITRIMONT, near Lunerville, France. —American sympathy with the civilian sufferers from the war has been given more concrete expression in this little village than in any other part of the devastated country immediately behind the French fighting lines.

When Mrs. William Crocker of San Francisco chose Vitrimont in which to carry out her idea of reconstructing with her own means one of the villages destroyed by the German troops in their first rush into France she met with much doubt and suspicion. The people of Lorraine are practical and hard-headed and also object to partake of anything given in the form of charity. It was therefore necessary to make the proposition a purely business-like one before laying it before the villagers.

Cannot Believe Good Fortune

All the men of fighting age are at the front with their regiments. One of the villagers while in the trenches one day received from his wife a letter giving details of the plan of reconstruction. He immediately replied: "Don't waste ink on telling me fairy tales. You are ready to swallow any yarn told you. Just make up your mind as I have done that we have lost everything and don't dream that good fairies are going to restore all to us."

In order to convince this man and many of his village neighbors serving in the same corps that somebody was really taking interest in them and that they would not merely have to be content with the government indemnity of 50 per cent of their losses, Miss Daisy Polk, also a Californian and now administrator of the plan, gave printed plans and details of the scheme to the wives left behind. These were forwarded at once to the men at the front, who could be assured only by documentary evidence of this kind of the good fortune to be conferred on them and their dependants.

Woman Supervises All Work

Miss Polk who, since the beginning of the war, has been occupied in relief work of various kinds was chosen by Mrs. Crocker to administer her benevolent scheme. She decided at

once to live among the people so as to become better acquainted with them and to learn their needs. Every house, without exception, had been either shelled or burnt. She, however, was able to find a one-roomed cottage which could be repaired and here from her single room Miss Polk directs all the work. She interviews there the architect, the builders, the department officials and government functionaries, and only recently received Ambassador William G. Sharp, who had come to lay the cornerstone of the first new house.

Of the 70 houses composing the village 24 were shelled and the remaining 38 burned. The government itself decided to repair the bombarded houses which were not so badly damaged as those which had been set afire. The reconstruction of these latter was undertaken by Mrs. Crocker.

Makes Some Changes

No attempt was made by the authors of the scheme to force American ideas down the throats of the conservative Lorrainers. Very little change had taken place in the village since the fifteenth century and the style of architecture was very uniform, usually taking the shape of one or two story cottages with gable-door entrances and attached at the back the granaries and cattle sheds. The only changes insisted on by the promoters of the scheme as well as by the French government were the introduction of sanitary arrangements which hitherto had been nonexistent, the provision of ventilation in the rooms and the separation by an intervening courtyard of the cattle sheds and the human habitations.

It was with difficulty that the peasants could be induced to accept some of these changes, but at length reason prevailed and the plans were finally drawn up.

The new village is to have wider streets and the main road through it is to be planted with trees, while the town hall and school are now to occupy prominent and spacious positions in the center of the village instead of being hidden as before the war in narrow lanes without any air space.

MOVEMENTS IN UNIFICATION OF CHURCHES ARE EFFECTIVE

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Important movements of church unification in America have advanced during the last four years and will have a far-reaching effect upon the mission field, according to the commission on foreign missions, which reported at the quadrennial meeting of the federal council of the Churches of Christ in America. The report is an exhaustive review of mission work abroad, laying stress upon the great advance that has been made in cooperation. Discussing church union, the commission says: "The proposed union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches in Canada will not only deeply influence the home mission policy and situation in Canada, it will deeply affect foreign missions in many

fields. The movement toward the unification of Methodism will completely change the missionary situation in Latin America and Asia and Africa, and is rightly stirring profoundly the thought of the missionary leaders."

In conclusion the report reads: "The events of the last two years have made humanity deeply conscious of its unity. To the uttermost corner of the world the influence of the European war has extended. Mankind recognizes that it is one body in which each member must suffer or profit with every other member. The common experiences of all men have been so deep and piercing as to eclipse their isolated and partisan experiences. The unity of human history and of human life has asserted itself against all that separates it. These unifying forces have collided with the

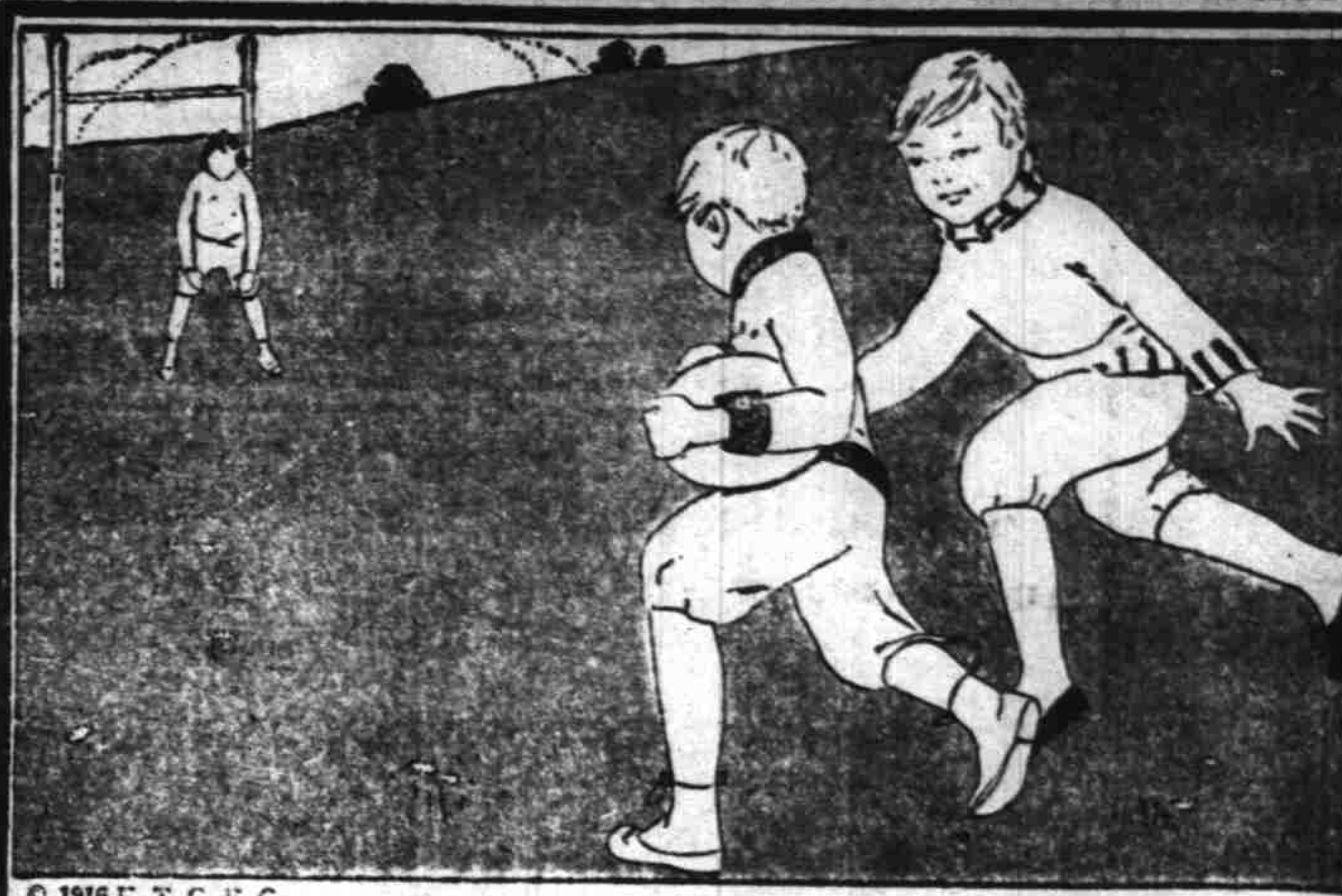
prejudiced tendencies of division. They have not collided with the enterprise of foreign missions. It has always been a movement of cooperation and unity. It has proclaimed the duty of international sympathy and goodwill. Even in the midst of the divisions and misunderstandings of war it has preserved the Catholic mind and the Christian spirit, and has held up before all schisms the loyalty of its unity.

"In China, where the Continental missions suffered great distress because of the cutting off of their sup-

plies, the missionary agencies of other lands took up the burden. In India the American Lutherans came to the aid of German missions, while the entire mission body in India assessed itself for funds for the relief of German missionaries who might be in need. To relieve the strain of misunderstanding between Japan and the United States, and to maintain the traditional relationship of common understanding and friendship, a substantial contribution was made in response to the call of the missionaries by the sending of Dr. Matthews, the

president of the Federal Council, and Dr. Gulick as a commission of goodwill from the churches of America. "The Christian churches working together in the missionary enterprises confront today both the privilege and the duty of unique service to humanity which needs above all else that principle of service and of unity and of love, of which the enterprise of foreign missions is the purest expression."

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